

# EDITORIALS

## Your Right to Know

By ROYCE HOWES

Associate Editor, Detroit Free Press

Winner 1955 Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Writing

October 1 through 8 has been set aside as National Newspaper Week.

It's purpose is to focus your attention on an institution in whose operation you have a vastly greater hand than perhaps you've ever realized. It is also an appropriate time to call your attention to an effort to deprive you of that hand.

The institution is your newspaper—daily, weekly or whatever.

Let's begin by dismantling that term newspaper. It means paper, which, after due processing, comes to you covered with news. Paper is a self-evident, tangible thing. There is no disagreement as to what it is. But what of news? It is far less self-evident and deceptively intangible.

News, in fact, is all things to all men. What it is depends on who is defining it.

And it is your definition, not the editor's which matters. The paper stays in business if it does a competent job of fulfilling your definition of news. If it devotes itself just to the editor's conception of news, it soon fails.

When a newspaper man speaks of his news judgment he doesn't mean his ability to determine what really counts under some mysterious process of selection. He means, instead, his ability to surmise what you will consider news. How good he is and how successful the paper is depends on how unerringly he can make that surmise.

All readers won't agree that some particular item is news, naturally, but the editor must meet each reader's definition often enough so that every reader will feel he's getting his money's worth when he buys the paper.

That is where and how you have such a very big hand in determining what goes into it.

Now as to the effort to take this function away from you. It lies in a growing effort by people, who are neither editors nor representatives of the readers, to decide arbitrarily which facts shall be printed—without reference to what any individual might consider news.

These people are the censor-minded. They appear in government and in pressure groups. They include those who try to conduct government behind closed doors and in secret places. They are all those who would take away free access to information which the citizen, with his individual right to say what is news, is entitled to have.

What baffles and frustrates the editor in the face of this is an attitude he not infrequently encounters among those who are being cheated of the right to decide for themselves what news is. When he talks about freedom of information, he often hears that what he really means is some undefined special privilege of his own. He is complaining, he is told, because his vanity is hurt.

What he rails against is nothing of the kind. His protests concern something he was never vain enough to do. That is, insist on deciding what news is without reference to what those who buy the news consider it to be.

National Newspaper Week's purpose will be served if you, the reader, pause to contemplate the big part you play in printing news and whether you are willing to have that part taken away from you. A sure way to lose it is to reason that when freedom of information goes the editor is the only loser. You lose far, far more than any editor possibly can.

## Our Archaic Statutes

The spectacle of a council operating under archaic charter rules that permit a fickle misuse of quorum powers, ought to arouse the citizenry of this city of some 65,000, to action.

Under the existing statute, any one or several council members can walk out on a meeting at any time and be perfectly within the rules of the game. Abused to the ultimate, the resulting chaos in the handling of vital matters can well be imagined.

A case in point was the situation created Tuesday evening at the regular meeting of the Torrance city council. Two members were absent when the meeting was called so a quorum existed only as long as the mayor and two members present remained in the room. A controversial issue (that has become a political football although it is of vital concern to the health and safety of any community) was brought up by one council member and the mayor promptly remembered he had a date.

Under the present statutes governing conduct of the Torrance council, the mayor was within his rights when he took his walk. The fact that he walked out on two groups of interested citizens waiting to be heard, however, reflects nothing to his credit and some bitter letters to this newspaper pretty well indicate that the constituents didn't like it.

When and if a change is made, it might be wise, also, to make it mandatory that no previous action of the council could be reversed or amended without all five members being present.

## The Most Powerful Bomb of All



## THE FREELANCER

By TOM RISCHÉ, Herald Staff Writer

When somebody goofs, there's generally a red face or two.

When a newspaper goofs, it can be either funny, sad, or maybe just nonsense. The biggest bugaboo facing any newspaperman is pesky typographical errors. They aren't intentional but they can be embarrassing and they have caused a number of lawsuits.

Typographical errors can be of several sorts: 1. Reporting on the opening of the new Torrance Armory, a newspaper in a nearby town reported that "a flight of pets will fly over the building as the troops pass in review."

In this case, the error was caused by the slip of a linotype's finger and wasn't caught by the proofreader. The type of error brings forth such embarrassing newspaper reports as the following:

"As she came down the aisle, the bride wore punk. The whole color scheme was punk."

"Fifty persons were present for one of the sappiest reunions ever seen here."

"Mrs. Smith was the featured sinner at the church dinner."

"The new hotel has reasonable rats."

2. A second type of boo-boo occurs when the printing shop men get a couple of different stories mixed up.

One newspaper in this area recently ran the following story under a headline which read, "MISS SMITH MARRIES JOE JONES."

"Brakes screeched, women screamed, and fenders crunched as two cars collided, sending three persons to the hospital."

"The bride wore a white satin dress as she came down the aisle."

3. Then there's the type of error that happens when the mind of the guy who wrote it was apparently not on his work.

"These include such eye-openers as the following which could be taken several different ways: "JOHN L. LEWIS WINS AND LOSES UNION SUIT!"

"Come in and see our new super-deluxe toaster — automatically burns toast!"

"Why go elsewhere to be cheated when you can come here?"

"For sale—Baker's business; good trade, large oven; present owner has been in it for seven years; good reason for leaving."

4. Finally, there are cases when persons involved in stories have the same names as other local individuals.

One paper had to run the following item after reporting that Police had picked up someone named Nettie Kinney on morals charges:

"The Nettie Kinney who was picked up by Police on morals charges Tuesday is not the Nettie Kinney who lives at 2222 1/2 Smith St., and is employed at the Ron Ton Dress Shoppe. The Nettie Kinney who was arrested lives at 888 1/2 Jones St., and was formerly employed as a waitress."

5. Finally, there is the typographical error which is pure nonsense, caused by a slip of the linotype's fingers. These seldom hurt anyone.

They may read like this: "Joseph T. Jones and his son, Wrtou, yeip cghu yprq xietu. They will return Monday."

Whenever and wherever they occur, these "goofs" are the horror of any newspaperman. They are embarrassing, if nothing else.

As the old saying goes, "To boo-boo is human."

## Newspapers Wage Eternal Fight For Right to Know All Facts

By DR. HAROLD L. CROSS  
Author of "The People's Right to Know."

"Let the voice of the people be the law." So, in Latin and wisely, says and inscription on Missouri's Capitol. If the voice is to speak with the authority of knowledge, the people themselves must speak out more vigorously for their right to know and the "law" must listen more intently to its master's voice.

The right to know by means of access to public records and proceedings is an attribute of the liberty guaranteed against wrongful deprivation by the Fifth Amendment. It is fundamental to intelligent exercise of the freedoms of speech and of the press guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment.

It is natural, then, that the theme of this liberty always arises in discussion of newspaper functions and responsibilities. The freedom of the newspaperman wishes and needs is not one restricted to his own profession. What he demands is the right of all men to obtain information and share opinion.

So it is that the theme "Your Newspaper: Fights for Your Right to Know" headlines the ever-old, ever-new story of journalism's struggle in the cause of legislative, judicial and official responses. The story for this National Newspaper Week is one of intensified efforts by all newspapermen and organizations and of mixed good fortune and misfortune for the people.

Anti-secrecy statutes with forceful impact on "closed meetings" and "executive sessions" have been passed in California, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, South Dakota, Utah, Ohio and Washington. Newspaper advocacy was less fortunate in such States as Kansas, Illinois and

Massachusetts. While the cause thus gained on balance in the states, it was losing ground at the national level. Congressional committees, in 1954, closed 41 per cent of their proceedings as against 34 per cent in 1953.

Newspapers saw the need to combat a disquieting trend toward enforced secrecy in judicial proceedings especially in the controversial phase of news coverage and photography. The most important single event of the year was the adverse ruling in New York in the Jellek litigation that the right of public trial is personal to the accused and can not be invoked by members of the public, including the press.

The impact of this was softened by recognition of the need for press attendance to constitute a "public trial" in the same court's simultaneous ruling that Jellek's right there to was violated by exclusion of the press during presentation of the prosecution's case. It was dulled still more by an Ohio court decision that the right is not personal to the accused and that the people have the right to force court proceedings out in the open.

The Ohio courts in another case supported in a measure the view of many members of Bench and Bar that courtroom photography ipso facto interferes with the administration of justice. They ruled that a court order barring photography was a proper exercise of judicial discretion and did not abridge press freedom, that its violation constituted contempt of court. Fortunately an increasing number of judges, apparently dubious of the poll-polluted opinions adverse to photography and seeking to ascertain the facts of the matter, allowed photographs to be taken and found that decorum was not disturbed.

The campaign for freedom of information, led by the or-

ganized newspaper press of the nation, faces the conflicting facts that while the need for secrecy in military is greater than ever before, the dangers of secrecy and the need for knowledge have also become greater than ever before.

In opposing extreme secrecy proposals under the Department of Defense directive of March 29, 1955 and the Office of Strategic Information, set up in the Department of Commerce, J. K. Wiggins, The Washington Post and Times Herald, chairman of the Freedom of Information Committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, said:

"The newspapers of this country have cheerfully consented to an orderly, carefully defined, voluntary censorship in two wars. I am sure they will continue to cooperate voluntarily in safeguarding classified information involving the country's military security. I am equally certain that they will not join in a conspiracy, with this or any other administration to withhold from the American people non-classified information which citizen's need in order to make sound judgments on national policy."

He ended by quoting Thomas Jefferson: "Your fellow citizens think they have a right to full information, in a case of such great concernment to them. It is their sweat which is to earn all the expenses of the war, and their blood which is to flow in expiation of the causes of it."

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## THE MAIL BOX

(The Torrance Herald welcomes expressions from its readers which can be published on this page. The editor retains the right to edit the copy for matters of libel and good taste. Letters should be kept brief and must be signed. The writer's name will be withheld if requested. Opinions expressed in letters here published represent those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Torrance Herald.)

### Rabies Ordinance

Editor, Torrance Herald:  
Your comments in the Sept. 29 issue of the Herald were of interest to me and to many other Torrance residents because at last we were informed of things in relation to our local events that take place in our City Council.

I refer to the Council meeting of Sept. 27, in which our mayor and council chairman walked out of the meeting just to prevent one particular ordinance from being voted on, an ordinance which from his past remarks in previous council meetings, he was very much interested in having made into a law for the City of Torrance even over the objections of other council members and citizens of the city.

It is quite obvious as to the fact that if he had stayed on his job and finished the regular business of that meeting, that he would have lost the or-

dinance because other Councilmen present were very much against this measure for good reasons that they had previously made public in the Council at previous meetings.

If the mayor feels that this Ordinance 776 is so good for the community why does he have to use such measures as he has constantly used throughout this whole affair to make it into law. I wonder if it isn't because he does not dare have all the people of Torrance hear and learn of all the good and bad sides of this bill, for surely there are both good and bad sides to it that have never been made public because of his desire to force it into law despite the fact that it was proposed at an earlier time when it was previously voted down to put it before the citizens for their pleasure at the polls.

I wonder if he took it upon himself to bring this bill back

after it had been voted down once because he may have been afraid of the final result if the people had an extra few months in which to become really acquainted with all the details. Does he feel that he can decide for the people better than they can themselves? At least his actions would so indicate that this is so.

If we are to have this kind of thing in our midst then it is about time we woke up to the fact that it can happen here as it has happened elsewhere.

So if our mayor does force this bill into law, I believe he will regret it because the people will not forget as easily as one might think.

I say if this bill is really good for the people it would have become law without his high-handed methods. Most good bills do.

B. JAMEY  
704 Amapola

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**THINGS TO TALK ABOUT**  
BY FRANKLIN J. MEINE  
Editor, American Peoples Encyclopedia

WHERE DO I BEGIN??

THREE HURRICANES HIT MORE THAN A MILLION TELEPHONES OUT OF SERVICE LAST WEEK. THE SERVICE RESTORATION JOB WAS THE BIGGEST IN TELEPHONE HISTORY.

APPROXIMATELY 100 GLASS CONTAINERS PER PERSON ARE PRODUCED IN THE UNITED STATES EVERY YEAR.

KILL JOBS!

Housing and business are more important than recreation, officials of Ottawa, Canada believe. The city recently tore up its only public golf course to make way for a multi-million dollar housing development and shopping center.